



# EXPLORATORY ROLE OF COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL FACTORS ON PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT AMONG YOUTH

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## ABSTRACT

An individual is said to be psychologically empowered when the individual has control and can make his/her own life choices, which is essential in present times. In this context, cognitive flexibility and self-control act as effective tools to regulate one's urges, be motivated and regulate the available resources in the most effective way, so that the individual can make successful life decisions and achieve the goals, while on other hand perseverative negative thinking hampers an individual's decision making and goal achievement, which is especially true in current times. Considering this aspect the purpose of the current study was to look at the connection between psychological empowerment, cognitive flexibility, perseverative thinking and self-control and to study the interaction of cognitive flexibility, perseverative thinking, and self-control concerning psychological empowerment in present times. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample. The study sample was university students of upper-middle and higher socioeconomic backgrounds aged between 18 and 25 years, from urban domicile. Product Moment Correlation and Regression analysis was administered to test the hypothesis. The result showed that the dimensions of psychological empowerment were significantly correlated with cognitive flexibility, self-control and perseverance, also the three variables of the study (cognitive flexibility, perseverative thinking, and self-control) significantly contributed variance in predicting psychological empowerment. This research implicates that there are clear potential benefits to delivering effective intervention for youth so that they can be taught ego depletion strategies which in turn leads to long term goal satisfaction.

**KEYWORDS:** Psychological Empowerment, Self-control, Perseverative Thinking, Cognitive-Flexibility, University Students

*"We have a powerful potential in our youth, and we must have the courage to change the old idea and practices so that we may direct their power towards good ends."*

- MARY MCLEOD

## INTRODUCTION

In today's environment individuals are becoming much more complex with opportunities for growth which requires them to be adaptable to the environmental factors and be empowered physically as well as psychologically.

An individual's cognitive state that is characterized by a sense of perceived control, competence, and goal internalization has been defined as psychological empowerment (PE). (Oladipo, 2009). Recently research has explored that PE and self-efficacy led to proactive behavior that is also referred to as a goal driven process, researches also showed that PE constitutes a driven attitude toward the work role, they are more satisfied and committed to their jobs (Huang, 2017; Dewettinck, Singh & Buyens, 2004; Crant, 2000; Spreitzer, 1995). Psychologically empowered individuals are more confident in their performance, behavior and communication which leads to them feeling competent, self-determined, impactful and will have congruency between their beliefs and role, in relation to this it has been seen that those, who are more cognitively flexible will have autonomy and ability to do meaningful work as well as leads to lower anxiety, high motivation and

high performance ability, which is a basic necessity in current times (Fredrickson, 2001; Savickas, 1984; Timarova & Salaets, 2011; Moore & Malinowski, 2009; Chen, Kanfer, Kirkman & Allen, 2007; Kuhn, 1996; Martin, Anderson, & Thweatt, 1998). Self-control is the capability to learn from your mistakes so that your future actions are more likely to be a successful in achieving goals, it helps an individual stay organized, focused and assessment of value they have for themselves and for others in the performance of their duties and is often determined towards achieving his goals and balance their life at work and outside of work as well as contribute to empowering an individual psychologically (Miller, 2021; Ciobanu, 2019; Hofmann et al., 2014; Moffitt, 2011; Roberts, Chernyshenko, Stark, Goldberg 2005; Wilber 2006; Galton 2006).

According to researchers, persistently negative thinking predicts sadness, anxiety, and emotional distress in persons who have long-term conditions and show performance decrease. One factor that can make a person ponder a lot more is the sense of stress, that can be because of social, environmental factors as well as similar psychological and physiological factors (Trick, Watkins, Wendeatt & Dickens 2016; Wilkins, 2015; Monroe, 2008; Michael et al., 2007).

Through PE, a person can effectively and independently express their interests, it also enables the individual to overcome their sense of powerlessness and lack of influence and to recognize

and use their resources which is very important for youth to learn in present times, thus the hypothesis of the study are as follows:

### Hypothesis

H1: Cognitive Flexibility has a relation with Psychological Empowerment.

H2: Perseverative Thinking has a relation with Psychological Empowerment.

H3: Self-control has a relation with Psychological Empowerment.

H4: The three variables of the study (cognitive flexibility, perseverative thinking, and self-control) will predict Psychological Empowerment.

### Sample

The sample of the study comprised of 138 both male and female university students between the age of 18 – 25, of upper middle and higher socioeconomic background with an urban domicile were selected using purposive sampling. Individuals who did not have basic understanding of English and kind of physical or psychological disability or mental disorder were excluded.

### Causal Research Design



Figure 1: Causal Research Design

### Measures

- Psychological Empowerment Instrument (PEI) (Spreitzer, 1995)
- Cognitive flexibility scale (Martin and Rubin, 1995)
- Perseverative thinking questionnaire –(Ehring, Zetsche, Ehlers, et.al., 2011)
- Brief self – control scale (Tangney, Baumeister, & Boone, 2004)

### Statistical Analysis

For the purpose of analysis following statistical measures will be obtained;

1. Mean
2. Standard Deviation
3. Correlation
4. Regression

### RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section incorporates the tables and figures of the statistical

	Cognitive Flexibility	Perseverance	Self-control
Meaning	.316**	-.255**	.195*
Competence	.330**	-.181*	.172*
Self Determination	.321**	-.086	.060
Impact	.423**	-.054	.216*

**Table 1: Bivariate Correlational Analyses showing Correlation between Independent Variable, Cognitive Flexibility, Perseverance and Self Control with dependent variable Psychological Empowerment (PE) (Meaning, Competence, Self Determination and Impact) (N = 138)**

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Significant positive correlation was found between Meaning (Dimension of PE) and Cognitive Flexibility and Self-control, Competence (Dimension of PE) and Cognitive Flexibility and Self-control, Self Determination (Dimension of PE) and Cognitive Flexibility, and Impact (Dimension of PE) and Cognitive Flexibility and Self-control. Significant negative correlation between Impact (Dimension of PE) and Perseverance and Competence (Dimension of PE) and Perseverance was found.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	10.893	2.538		4.292	.000
	Cognitive Flexibility	.138	.035	.134	3.965	.000
	Perseverance	-.038	.020	-.188	-1.914	.058
	Self-Control	.028	.028	.096	.973	.332

**Table 2: Linear Regression Analysis for Meaning (Dimension of PE)**

a. Dependent Variable: Meaning (Dimension of PE)

(NOTE: fit for model  $R^2 = .166$  Adjusted  $R^2 = .147$ ;  $F = 8.879$ ,  $p < 0.001$ )

**Table 2** shows the predicting variables viz. Cognitive Flexibility, Perseverance and Self-Control together predict 14.7% variance in Meaning (Dimension of PE) which is found to be significant at 0.01 level ( $F = 8.879$ ) and individually only Cognitive Flexibility predicts Meaning (Dimension of PE).

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	6.235	3.010		2.071	.040
	Cognitive Flexibility	.171	.041	.33	4.164	.000
	Perseverance	-.022	.024	-.094	-.942	.348
	Self-Control	.044	.034	.130	1.305	.198

**Table 3: Linear Regression Analysis for Competence (Dimension of PE)**

a. Dependent Variable: Competence (Dimension of PE)  
(NOTE: fit for model  $R^2 = .149$  Adjusted  $R^2 = .130$ ;  $F = 7.833$ ,  $p < 0.001$ )

**Table 3** shows the predicting variables viz. Cognitive Flexibility, Perseverance and Self-Control together predict 13.0% variance in competence (Dimension of PE) which is found to be significant at 0.01 level ( $F = 7.833$ ) and individually only Cognitive Flexibility predicts Competence (Dimension of PE).

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	7.993	2.134		3.746	.000
	Cognitive Flexibility	.180	.041	.321	3.955	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Self Determination (Dimension of PE)  
(NOTE: fit for model  $R^2 = .103$  Adjusted  $R^2 = .097$ ;  $F = 15.644$ ,  $p < 0.001$ )

**Table 4** shows the predicting variables i.e. Cognitive Flexibility alone predict 9.7% variance in Self Determination (Dimension of PE) which is found to be significant at 0.01 level ( $F = 15.644$ ).

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.195	2.070		2.027	.045
	Cognitive Flexibility	.199	.035	.433	5.742	.000
	Self-Control	.070	.023	.234	3.102	.002

**Table 5: Linear Regression Analysis for Impact (Dimension of PE)**

a. Dependent Variable: Impact (Dimension of PE)  
(NOTE: fit for model  $R^2 = .234$  Adjusted  $R^2 = .222$ ;  $F = 20.600$ ,  $p < 0.001$ )

**Table 5** shows the predicting variables i.e. Cognitive Flexibility and self-control predict 22.2% variance in Impact (Dimension of PE) which is found to be significant at 0.01 level ( $F = 20.600$ ).

## DISCUSSION

The objective of the study was to investigate PE with the cognitive (cognitive flexibility and perseverance) and behavioural (self-control) factors in the current times.

The findings suggest that individuals with higher level of Cognitive flexibility and Self-control feel competent, self-determined, will be able to make an impact and have an alignment between their goals and beliefs, and it results in the individuals having high PE, on the contrary individuals with high perseverance will not be able to stop dwelling upon specific desultory reoccurring thoughts; thus they will not feel competent and might not have congruence between their goals and beliefs this will result in them not perceiving themselves

as PE. As per Bandura (1986), people use distinct data sources concerning their facilities to attain their goal, clustering them when needed, and practising appropriate behaviours to attain the goal and to move forward cognitive flexibility is required (Bandura, 1982; 1989). Lewin's (1951) field theory supports the notion that an individual's traits such as cognitive flexibility and self-control, and environment free of ruminating thoughts will result in the individual cause certain behaviours such as being competent, self-determined and impactful in the society and also towards achieving the goals.

Investigation of prior researches concluded that, individuals who have increased level of cognitive flexibility usually have greater levels of self-efficacy belief can perform developmental tasks better, enables decision-makers to achieve significantly higher decision-making performance, are more cooperative within social interactions and have high competency in achieving their goals (Laureiro-Martínez & Brusoni, 2018; Çelikkaleli, 2014; Gan, Shang & Zhang, 2007; Silvia, 2006; Kim & Omizo, 2005; Miyake et al., 2000; Martin & Rubin, 1995) these findings support hypothesis 1. Studies supporting hypothesis 2, found that work-related rumination was negatively related to competence needs satisfaction, it was also seen that perseverance was not a contributor to commitment exhibited poorer problem-solving effectiveness and poorer confidence regarding their problem-solving might result in them feeling less competent (Weigelt, Syrek, Schmitt, & Urbach, 2019; O'Mahen, Boyd & Gashe, 2015; Scott, 2002). Hypothesis 3 is supported by researches; During the planning and goal-setting phases, self-control is required to ignore conflicting objectives and unimportant information. It helps an individual regulate his/her actions. People who have a high level of self-control are viewed as trustworthy partners since they can follow the rules and are competent (Righetti & Finkenauer, 2011; Johnson, Chang & Lord, 2006).

## IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER STUDIES

Furthermore, the current study has some implication that can be beneficial for individuals and for their growth.

As said in Bhagavad Gita that for an individual to attain the goal, the individual should believe in their competence, their value and utilize every opportunity provided to bring change i.e. be psychologically empowered; self-control and cognitive ability to shift and utilize in knowledge in hands enhances individuals PE, whereas perseverance of negative thoughts will hamper the goal attainment. Therefore, further strategies and intervention for young adults can be developed to enhance self-control and cognitive flexibility and reduce negative persistent thoughts so that the individual can become psychologically empowered and attend the goal.

The current research implies that psychologically empowered individuals, would be able to shift between tasks and be able to utilize resources and knowledge to the best of ability and will also be able to make cognitive judgements regarding work which might result in an individual to attain career maturity as they would easily be able to shift between cognitive tasks.

Future studies can work in analyzing the relationship between psychological empowerment and career maturity.

Studies have pointed out that PE is an important component of subjective well-being; delayed gratification and self-control which predicts psychological empowerment start developing at an early age. Thus this study provides a ground for further researches on investigation that can help in understanding the pattern of how delayed gratification leads to psychological empowerment and in-turn lead to subjective well-being in individuals.

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